

## **A Study of Cross-Cultural Understanding of Showing Anger in Indonesian and Australian Families**

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### **Abstrak**

Ada beberapa berbagai cara ekspresi kemarahan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, baik melalui bahasa verbal dan bahasa non-verbal. Bagaimana anak-anak mengekspresikan kemarahan mereka kepada orang tua mungkin hampir mirip dengan ekspresi kemarahan orang tua untuk anak-anak atau tergantung pada nasihat orang tua kepada anak-anak. Menurut Keesing, *culture is the regular behaviour of people in one area which is done by the majority people in that area and also be done with the generation after* (1985). Penelitian ini merupakan pemahaman lintas budaya dalam menunjukkan kemarahan di keluarga Indonesia dan Australia. Ini fokus pada ekspresi kemarahan di kedua negara. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui perbedaan budaya menunjukkan kemarahan di kedua negara. Penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dan teori Goodenough tentang budaya digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data penelitian ini yang telah diperoleh melalui proses wawancara dan observasi dianalisis berdasarkan tiga pertanyaan penelitian.

Berdasarkan analisis data, inilah hasil bahwa cara keluarga di Indonesia dan Australia menunjukkan kemarahan berbeda, sedangkan ekspresi kemarahan antara anak dan orang tua hampir sama. Berteriak, menghentak dan membanting sangat umum dalam keluarga Australia sebagai ekspresi kemarahan mereka, baik dari orang tua kepada anak-anak dan sebaliknya. Mereka bebas untuk menunjukkan apa yang mereka pikirkan dan rasakan dan mereka tidak memiliki rasa hormat yang sama dengan Indonesia, terutama anak-anak kepada orang tua. Di Indonesia, kedua orang tua dan anak-anak cenderung untuk berbicara dengan tenang dan memecahkan masalah pribadi ketika mereka marah. Orang tua selalu berbicara dengan anak-anak dan kadang-kadang memberikan nasihat kepada anak-anak tentang apa yang sopan dan sopan. Jadi, anak-anak di Indonesia cenderung mengekspresikan kemarahan mereka melalui wajah dan bahasa tubuh karena mereka saling menghormati. Namun, perilaku ini akan selalu seperti ini di kedua negara karena budaya mereka benar-benar berbeda. Australia memiliki kebebasan sebagai budaya, sementara Indonesia menghormati satu sama lain. Ini sudah menjadi budaya yang akan terus dilakukan oleh generasi berikutnya.

**Kata Kunci:** *cross-culture, expressions, anger, verbal, non-verbal, families, Indonesia-Australia.*

### **Abstract**

There are some various ways of anger expressions in people's daily life, both through verbal language and non-verbal language. How children express their anger to the parents might be almost similar with the anger expressions of parents to children or depend on the parents' advices to the children. According to Keesing, *culture is the regular behaviour of people in one area which is done by the majority people in that area and also be done with the generation after* (1985). This study is about cross-culture understanding of showing anger in Indonesian and Australian families. It focuses on the expressions of anger in both countries. This study is conducted to find out the differences of culture of showing anger in both countries. In this study, descriptive qualitative approach and Goodenough's theory of culture are used. The data of this study that have been obtained through the process of interview and observation are analyzed based on the three research question.

Based on the data analysis, here comes the results that the way of family showing anger in Indonesia and Australia is different, meanwhile the expressions of anger between children and parents is almost similar. Yelling, screaming, stomping and slamming are very common in Australian families as their anger expressions, both from parents to the children and the opposite. They are free to show what they think and feel and they do not have the same respect with Indonesian, especially children to parents. In Indonesia, both parents and children tend to talk calmly and solve the problem privately when they are angry. Parents always talk to the children and sometimes give advices to the children about what is polite and impolite. So, children in Indonesia tend to express their anger through face and body language because they respect each other. However, this behavior will be

always like this in both countries because their culture is really different. Australian has freedom as the culture, while Indonesian respecting each other. It has been regular behavior which will be done by the next generations.

**Keywords:** *cross-culture, expressions, anger, verbal, non-verbal, families, Indonesia-Australia*

## INTRODUCTION

People have their freedom to show their feeling: sad, happy, angry, etc. In the way of people show their feelings; there were some differences in expressions and behavior. It may be influenced by the culture of the environment of how people behave. Each country has its own culture in how to behave. Western and Eastern country will not have the same culture. It also happens in the closest and smallest environment of people; family.

Every people come from different environment, which is called families as the closest environment of people. The way of people behave depend on the habit of their families and other environment they live with. The attitude and behavior of high status families may be different with they are who come from low status families. How people talk and behave usually depend on how they were indirectly taught since they were in the early ages by their parents. For example, people from high status families usually have dinner together in one table, and when they come to their friend from low status family which has different habit of having dinner, they will feel weird of that thing.

High status family is the families with good education and low status families usually come from less educated people. How they behave may be different because they live in different environment. Even though they know each culture of different status and their habits, but it will not influence each other simply just by knowing. Sometimes low status families do not allow their siblings to act like high status families because that is not their culture, also the opposite. Some people say that high status families are influenced by western culture, etc.

Indonesia and Australia is two countries with different culture. In Australia the freedom of showing feelings and thoughts is very important, also the self-spacing. While in Indonesia it is important to be polite and care to each other. *There*

*is a view of Australians as insulting and criticizing of Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Reisinger & Turner, 1997).* Besides, Australians are also seen as not being committed to educating themselves about Asia and its culture because the culture is quite different with eastern countries. But there are people who are bi-cultural - but not bilingual - *that is someone who had direct experience of the two cultures and can understand the nuances of each (Kepler, Royse, & Kepler, 1996).* So it is not that difficult to bi-cultural people to adapt with both cultures in their language, both orally and by the gestures.

Communication is something that can use continual work, and often tactics change in different relationship. In a families, people tend to speak spontaneously like what they have learnt from the very earlier ages. Vocabularies and intonation that children learn might be used to tell something, to show a particular emotions also thoughts. *For many people, emotion means physiological arousal (Planalp, 1999).* Emotions can be sad, happy, angry, embarrassed. Etc. Emotion do produce some changes in physiological part at least some times such as raising and falling of intonation, changing of face, more powerful gestures, etc.

There are some emotions that can be shown in a communication, such as happy, ashamed, even angry. It is known that the contradiction about showing anger in some countries still happens nowadays. *Anger would be only partially identifiable with "furious" bodily gesturing (Cataldi, 1993b).* Western and Eastern people have their own habit in expressing feelings and solving problems. The majority of Eastern families usually respect parents and holding politeness as their habit in showing emotions especially anger. While Western families tend to be free to show their anger. Yelling and swearing are commonly happen in expressing anger, both from parents to children and the opposite.

It is rarely recognized about others' feeling when people show their anger. Where actually, hurt someone else should be avoided when people express anger or other feelings. Based on the case that mentioned above, the present study will find some facts about how people usually show their emotion, especially in Western families.

This study discussed a cross-cultural understanding of showing emotion in particular area. Statement of the problem in this study is how the member of a families show their anger to other member especially to elders. The research questions of this study are; (1) how do usually Indonesian and Australian children show their anger to their parents?, (2) how do usually Indonesian and Australian parents show their anger?, (3) how does culture work to influence the attitude of someone in showing anger?. This study is conducted to find out the expressions of anger in Indonesian and Australian families, both parents and children, and the influence of culture to the attitude of someone n expressing their anger.

Two Indonesian families and two Australian families were chosen as the subject of this study. The families consist of parents and three or four children. The first family of each country comes from high status family and the second family comes from low status family. The different class of families is used to prove the issue that high status family is influenced by other cultures. Practically, the study was meant to provide feedback for people to learn about cross-cultural understanding.

There were some theories used in this study. Those are family relationship by R.M. Keesing, culture and emotions by Mesquita and Leu, and verbal and non-verbal language as the expression of anger Robinson and Kepler et all.

The relationship of families in each country may be different. Even each family has their type of relationship. However family is the biggest influence for children behavior. According to R. M. Keesing, Common patterns of childhood experience create a characteristic personality orientation; and in learning a culture, a child acquired motives and values, a distinctive world view" (Keesing, 1985). How often and under what circumstances an infant is fed and bathed, how it is held, how and when it is disciplined, depends on the customs of a particular people. So it is known that families as the closest

environment to children will give much influence the children's behavior. Children are easy to imitate what their parents do and say, also other cultures that have been the circumstances of the environments.

Each environment has its own culture in how to behave, what to believe, and how to think. According to Mesquita & Leu, "there are also many cultural differences in how people perceive and express their emotions and in how often they experiences specific emotions" (Mesquita, 2003: Mesquita & leu, 2007). Cultural differences have been found in nonverbal expressions of emotions too. It happens because people can and do learn to control and modify their expressions. Thus, nonverbal expressions of emotions vary somewhat across cultures because of culture-specific attitudes and display rules.

However there are some expressions of anger towards spoken language and it much easier to recognize the anger. People who are angry tend to tend their intonation while speaking, even sometimes yelling. In some cases, they may swear to the people who make them angry. But there are also some people who do not want anybody else knows about their anger to avoid hurt someone's feelings. Those are all depend on the people themselves.

Verbal language is the first choice of the way people communicate each other. How people tell something to anyone else is different one with another. It is related to the theory of family relationship, how parents tell the children about something good and not good is divided into some ways. Parents have their own way to teach their children. According to W.P. Robinson, there are three different styles of parents, especially mother, to teach the children; *imperative techniques*, *positional appeals*, *personal appeals* (Robinson, 1972).

Imperative technique is the technique which the parents talk to the children directly to the point. Not really soft in telling something, but straight to the topic. Positional technique is using allusion by sex, age, and families. So the parents will give the children an example or allusion so that the children will think deeply about what they should or should not do. Personal appeals is the technique which the parents, especially mother talk softly to the children. With this technique, parents can have closer

relationship with the children and the children will not be offended.

Besides that, body language is the non-verbal communication that is done every day. It is a kind of humans' communication through body movements as the symbols. Some people believe that body language is only a secondary means of communication used to supplement speech. When people use their body language as their speaking, the gestures automatically will modify or confirm what is said "Linguists believe that all communities that use spoken language also use many non-verbal gestures" (Kepler *et al.*, 1996). That is why, body language should not be considered as limited meanings of expression. In some ways, there are more expressive body movements than forms of speaking and writing. So people can express their anger through verbal and non-verbal language. It was observed during the study.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study is descriptive-qualitative study because it does not take any statistical method. It is about exploring issues, understanding cultural differences, and answering questions. According to the book Project in Linguistics : A Practical Guide to Researching Language, "qualitative research or qualitative data is something related to judgments, perceptions, insights, etc" (Wray, Trot, Bloomer, Reay, & Butler, 2001). Because this study is a qualitative study, so it will have an interesting part in meanings, perspectives, and understandings. Beside that an emphasis on process and a concern with the analysis and grounded theory was also taken in this study.

The subjects of this study are Indonesian and Australian families. In this study, two Indonesian families and two Australian families were interviewed. The Indonesian families are the families who are born and live in Indonesia. Also the Australian families mean that the parents and the children are Australian nationality. Mix-marriage families are not included in this study. Place of the study is in Indonesia and Australia. For Indonesian families, the interview and observation were taken on the spot. While for Australian families, the interview is quite complicated because it uses electronic media for the interview. And the observation is taken also via internet.

First, before doing the interview or observation, it is important in this study to look for the families, both in Indonesia and Australia. After looking for the available families, the interview and observation were done. As the writer had collected the required data for the study, the next step is analyzing the collected data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The expressions of people in showing their anger may be different. How parents angry to the children and the opposite may be similar or different. However, it relates to the culture itself. Culture is the way of how people in an area behave, think, and belief. Each area has its own culture as the regular behavior. It means that the majority people in a particular area do something as the behavior and it is also done by the next generation in that area. The culture that is discussed in this study is about emotional experience; anger expressions.

Emotion is made up of cognitive, physiological, and behavioral components. Similarities and differences might be found in how people perceive and express their emotions, especially anger. This study is focused to the expression of anger in families in two countries; Indonesia and Australia. This section will discuss the similarities and differences of people in those families express their anger and the culture of each country itself. Before discuss the whole things in this study, there is the table to show the finding which are found during the study. See Table 1.

FINDINGS		
Families	Expressions of Anger	
	Parents	Children
Australian Family 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- yell to children</li> <li>- slam the children (the boys)</li> <li>- leave the children</li> <li>- take away boys' play station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- yell to the parents</li> <li>- do not want to talk with the parents</li> <li>- slam or punch something in the house</li> <li>- say swearwords</li> </ul>
Australian Family 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- yell to children</li> <li>- give the children more chores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- yell to the parents</li> <li>- stomping along the house</li> </ul>



	- talk to the children	- lock themselves in their room - doing something else
Indonesian Family 1	- talk slowly to the children - ask what the children want - leave the children for a while	- keep silent - cry - talk to the parents
Indonesian Family 2	- talk to children privately - give the children some advices - give the children time to think	- show sullen face - keep silent - talk privately to the parents

Table 1 Findings of the Study

Both families in Australia that had been interviewed and observed show their anger mostly through words and high intonation. Both parents and children can argue and yell each other. The parents can express their anger in some various ways. They may yell, scream, or slam their children when they are angry. Solving problem is done during the dinner time only. So the children will not talk to the parents until dinner time. Even sometimes they never talk about the problem anymore after arguing each other. Sometimes the parents in Australian families will give what their children want to make their children do not angry anymore. But in many cases, they keep angry until the children cool down themselves.

Not only the parents, but also the children have their freedom to show their anger. The children do not really think about polite or impolite. They only think that what their parent do, they can do the same thing, also in showing their anger. They may scream, yell, and say swearwords to the parents when they are angry. Even they often slam the door to show their anger to the parents. Respecting elders and the advices is not the culture in Australia. So, they always show their disagreement directly to the parents in some harsh ways. The parents will not be offended because it has been their culture to be free in expressing anything, include their anger. The children imitate the attitude of their parents in their daily activity, also the expressions of their anger because they

believe that those are their culture to be free in expressing something.

In contrast, two families in Indonesia have different expressions of anger with Australian families. Both parents in two families who had been interviewed and observed do not show their anger to the children by yelling or screaming, even slamming. They tend to tell slowly to the children. Sometimes they angry and nag the children, but they always avoid bad words. The parents in these two families always give advice to their children and then talk with their children about what they want and solve the problem. Besides that the parents always give the children their own time to evaluate and think clearly whether their behavior is good or bad.

Children, in these two Indonesian families, are also ever angry with their parents. But they have different expressions of anger with those children in Australian families. Children in Indonesia tend to keep silent when they are angry. Most of them express their anger through their face expression. They show sullen face, and tilt their eyebrow into the center of face. The children seldom argue their parents and always avoid disagreement. When the parents are angry, the children never argue the parents because arguing parents is impolite, they said. It can be happened because from the childhood ages the parents have told the children about what polite and impolite to do to elders, especially their parents. The parents also give example to the children that when the parents were young, they never or ever do something and give explanation why those things should or should not be done by the children.

The explanation supports the theory of Mesquita, 2003: Mesquita & Leu, 2007 which say that *there are many cultural differences in how people perceive and express their emotions and in how often they experience specific emotions (Weiten, 2007)*. It can be seen from subchapter 4.1 and the explanations above that the expressions of anger in families in two different countries are different. Not only the expressions, but also the reasons of their anger are also different. However, the behavior of parents when they are angry will almost similar with the children in one area. It means that the social status of families does not really take place in the changing of behavior even when they are angry.

It means that people in one area have their regular behavior. The smallest and closest environment is families which is the concern of this study. The things which are done by the parents will also be done by the children in the future. The parents also do the behavior which was done by the grandparents. It means that culture in one environment will not be endangered because the next generation will do the same things as the elders. It also automatically shows the agreement with the theory of Goodenough which said that *culture has been used to refer to the pattern of life within a community-the regularly recurring activities and material and social arrangement (Keesing, 1985)*. The activities of people in that families will regularly be done. The next generation, children, will do something by imitating their parents' behavior. Besides that, they also listen to the parents about the things that should or should not be done.

The culture of expressing anger is shown in this study. In one area, Australia, the parents in two different families show their anger in some harsh ways. Then, the children do the same thing because firstly at the earlier ages, they recognized the expressions as the anger expressions. When they have grown up, they finally imitate their parents' behavior. Even the parents never show that they are offended with their children's behavior. So, the children do not ever feel that they do it wrong. They know that they have their freedom in showing anger, as free as their parents. In another area, Indonesia, parents tend to express their anger by nagging the children. They will tell the children if they do something wrong. But the children do not nag the parents, too because it is not their culture to show disagreement and they must respect their parents and the advices. They believe that the parents angry because the parents want them to be better person. The children do not imitate the way parents nag and angry to them, but they listen to the parents about parents' experiences that they never argue their parents when they were young because they must respect their parents. So, the children imitate how young people respect the elders especially their parents.

Talking about different culture, Indonesia and Australia have really different culture of how they express their anger. It is shown directly through their expressions, both parents and

children. Some specific cultures according to Reisinger and Turner (*see page 19*) can be seen in the result above. The expressions of anger in each country can represent some specific cultures; respecting elders, politeness, emotions, expressions, behavior, etc.

First, the difference is in the focus of the families in two areas in experiencing and expressing anger. Indonesian families focus on dependence, obedience, and welfare of others. It means that the children always obey their parents and do not argue much. Besides that the children always avoid hurting parents' feeling so they avoid bad words, even high intonation. The parents also avoid bad words and high intonation when they are angry so that the children do not feel offended. On the other hand, Australian families focus on independence, challenge, and self-interest. Both parents and children have their independence, their freedom in showing anger. They do not really think about others' feeling. Self-interest is related with the reason of their anger. Both families in Australia usually get angry if the member of families cut them off when doing something, especially the children. So, they feel that the parents cut them off from enjoying life. That is the common reason why they get angry.

Second, how children respect their parents as well even when they are angry or when their parents are angry. Indonesian children tend to respect elders and their advice. The children in two families in Indonesia mostly do not argue their parents and do not do bad things when they are angry because they respect their parents. The children always avoid bad words or high intonation when they are angry because bad words and high intonations from children to parents are impolite. Besides that when the parents are angry, they will talk to the children and give advices to them. In this case, the children will listen carefully to the advices and do it as well. They believe that the advices were good for their life in the future.

In contrast, Australian children do not have the same respect to the parents and their advices. High intonation even swearwords are often shown by the children to show their anger to the parents. They do not really think about polite or impolite because most children in Australia do that thing. In addition, they also do not respect their parents'

advices. The children in those two families think that they are teenagers now and they have their right to enjoy their own time. Sometimes when the parents give them advice, they argue it and do not listen more to the parents even when the parents are angry.

Third, the last specific culture can be seen is the culture of controlling emotions and expressions of disagreement. Two Indonesian families show that they control their emotions, especially the parents. When they are angry, they do not do harsh things and say bad words. They tend to talk slowly to the children and give them advice. Besides that the children also avoid their disagreement to their parents. They avoid arguing each other. But two Australian families have the culture of open disagreement. Both parents and children have their right to show their disagreement directly. That is why arguing each other is very common in these two Australian families.

To conclude, how they show their emotions, especially anger, depends on the culture in that area itself. The expressions of anger in Australia and Indonesia are different because they have their own culture. Australia has independence and self-interest as the culture. Indonesia has respect and control of emotions as the culture. So, culture has a big influence for someone in showing their anger.

## **CONCLUSION**

Anger is one of the emotions experienced by people. After conducting the observation and interview for this study, it is caught that the expressions of anger in families in two countries, Indonesia and Australia, are really different. Australian families, both parents and children, tend to express their anger through words and attitude. The parents usually show their anger by yelling, screaming, even slamming the children. Besides that, the children also express their anger by yelling, stomping, and slamming the door. Two children in Australia families tend to keep silent when they are angry, however they cannot control their anger sometimes. So, yelling and swearing cannot be avoided in these families.

On the other hand, the anger expressions of parents and children in Indonesia are different. The parents in two Indonesian families tend to show

their anger by talking slowly to the children and nag the children. Besides that they also solve the problem immediately. The children in Indonesian families mostly keep silent when they are angry to respect their parents. The children avoid offending their parents and always be polite even when they are angry. It happens because from the very earlier ages of children, the parents have already given them some advices that they have to respect elders, especially their parents. So, politeness is really emphasized in Indonesia, even when they are angry. Arguing or yelling each other is not appropriate.

This can be happened because Indonesia and Australia have different culture. Three specific cultures are related to this study; focus, respect, expressions of emotions. First, Indonesian families focus on dependence, obedience, and welfare of others, while Australian families focus on independence, challenge, and self-interest. Second, Indonesian families especially children respect their parents and their advices, while children in Australian families do not respect their parents and their advices as well. And the last is, Indonesian families control their emotion somehow and avoid disagreement, while Australian families express their disagreement directly. Those are the culture related to the anger expressions in both countries.

So, social status of each family does not take any place in influencing someone's behavior, even when they are angry. Each country will not influence each other in the expressions of anger, whether it is western to eastern or the opposite. On the other hand, culture has a big role to influence anger expressions because culture is a regular behavior. That is why no culture will be endangered; because the children will always imitate what their parents do and it happens over and over. It means that the behavior is done by people in that environment and will also be done by the next and next generation after.

## **SUGGESTION**

This study is conducted to observing the anger expressions of two different countries. It is expecting to interest the readers and become the interesting thing to be investigated more by other researchers. There are many things that can be explored about cross-culture understanding

between two or more different countries. Different culture will show different attitude of someone in those areas.

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